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Essays, Expositions, &c.

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THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

BY WILLIAM STOKES, MANCHESTER.

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"But can ye not discern the signs of the times?" MATT. xvi. 3.
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*(Continued from page 124.)*

II. THE PROBABLE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGNS OF THESE OUR TIMES.

In various ages of the world, signs have been given from Heaven, or appointed upon earth to express the will and purpose of God,—to point out human duty, or to indicate guilt and approaching punishment. They are sometimes said to have a voice. "And it shall come to pass, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign." (Exodus iv. 8) The bow in the clouds was, and yet remains, the sign of promise: the appointment of the Sabbath is a sign between God and man, and expresses the claim of the Creator upon the service and obedience of the creature. (Exodus xxxi. 13—17) The rent altar was a fearful sign to the idolatrous Jeroboam, as the return of the shadow upon the dial was one of mercy to a praying Hezekiah. The prophet Ezekiel, in the removal of his goods, and in forbearing to mourn on the death of his wife, was a striking sign to the rebellious Israelites. Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, as also the Lord Christ to the Jews: but the one repented at the sign and were spared, while the other condemned the sign and were rejected from being a people upon earth.

Less direct and special, but not less instructive or portentous, are the signs of our own times. If they no longer approach to the miraculous,—they appear more closely allied to cause and effect,—they are none the less important as exponents of that Almighty providence that ruleth in the affairs of men. As classified events they indicate the movements of that providence in its merciful or punitive administration, and their

significance is to be understood by their aspect towards the announced and determined purpose of God. Applying this as the rule, we proceed to consider the probable significance of the present signs of the times.

I. *As they respect the Church.*

1. *They betoken the necessity of a more earnest zeal in maintaining and enforcing the great principles and fellowship of evangelical truth.* The more these important principles are neglected or contemned by mankind generally, the more zealous should be the servants of God in their preservation. In such a case the taste of the people is not the criterion of duty, for to consult that would be a virtual abandonment of all that is peculiar and distinctive in the gospel of Christ; and as this would be systematic treason against the King in Zion, it would justly incur his severest condemnation. What if a Triune-Jehovah,—the total depravity of man,—the atonement and substitution of Christ,—and the free grace of God in election,—are distasteful to carnal men? What if Regeneration by the Holy Spirit,—Baptism as the rule of fellowship,—the Imputed Righteousness of Christ,—and personal Holiness as indispensable to the happiness of Heaven,—are unfashionable doctrines? The more distasteful they are, the more faithfully they should be pressed on public attention; and the more unfashionable they are deemed by men, the more earnestly should they be enforced as the imperishable truths and unalterable appointments of the living God. We are not accountable for the perverse taste of a carnal world, but we are accountable for our fidelity to divine truth; and the voice of the sign is "in season—out of season;—whether men will hear or forbear;—be thou faithful unto death."

2. *They assert the necessity of more mighty prayer for the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit.* In this important particular the sign speaks out in terms too plain to be misunderstood. We have an ample scholarship, a ceaseless activity, a wide spread machinery of means and ordinances; but the results are disproportionate even to almost disappointment. Why else do we complain of vice in every form of bold audacious impudence, stalking forth in open day through every street of every city in this Christian land? Why is it that with an array of ministers and agencies of numerous sects, working industriously among the whole population, yet the Christian church can scarcely hold its own, and in not a few instances is doomed to stand the impotent spectator of play houses, horse races, gambling, commercial dishonesty, mocking infidelity, and every brutal vice, which its combined power is too feeble to suppress? Why this and even more? Is it not plain that our present weapons are not "mighty to the pulling down of strongholds?" And why thus powerless? The sign speaks loudly in declaring that our strength is the Spirit, and the Spirit's presence is secured by mighty prayer alone.

3. *These signs indicate the great probability of a severe sifting among the Churches.* With the sternest truthfulness it may be affirmed that "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God." If, in apostolic days, and so soon after the ascension of the Redeemer, it was necessary to apply judgment to "the house of God;" is it not at least equally necessary now? A process of discrimination to sever the chaff from the wheat, the dross from the gold, appears to be indispensable

from time to time, in order to prevent the ruin which accumulated corruptions would occasion. These corruptions are introduced chiefly, by such as acknowledge the foundation, but who build upon it "wood, hay, stubble," where they should collect but "gold, silver, and precious stones." Not content with the exquisite simplicity of the gospel, they must improve on perfection itself, and where it is the highest honour to obey, there they assume to be dictators. Gradually, this spirit collects a mass of human inventions, superstitious rites, and unmeaning ceremonies, beneath which the pure gospel is almost hidden from human view; and where it was intended to exhibit the Cross alone, there men behold a religion of idle observances which are nowhere found in the word of God. This is invariably the case with State Churches, whether Papal or Protestant, Infant Sprinkling, Open Communionism, and that "voluntary humility" from which Arminianism is never free. These different forms of a gratuitous religion, flattering to human vanity as they ever have been and yet remain, gather an immense heap of chaff within the sacred enclosure of the church, and render it necessary that He should come "whose fan is in his hand,—to thoroughly purge his floor." He cannot permit the accumulated corruption to remain, but He must bring the judgment that shall destroy the "wood, hay, stubble,—even so as by fire."

In what form this judgment will come to the modern church,—whether by Popery that shall once more renew "the fiery trials" of departed ages,—or by a cold unfeeling Rationalism that would rejoice in the pride and cruelty of a Robespierre and a Danton,—or by some political convulsion that will restore for a time the dominion of an ecclesiastical despotism,—is known alone to Him who pierces the future through all coming ages. This only we are assured of, that when the spirit of a Sardis is indulged in the church, "He who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" solemnly declares, "If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

II. *We consider these signs as they effect the world at large.*

1. *They indicate a growing tendency in favour of a general brotherhood among all mankind.* The ceaseless agitation,—the wide-spread and increasing commercial enterprise,—and the almost universal extension of knowledge, are "schooling" the human race into the belief of a common origin, a common nature, and an equal destiny. No longer the victims of ignorance which is allied to hate, and evermore produces a selfishness beneath whose deadly shade the most brutish vices find perpetual shelter and repose;—the inhabitants of nearly every distant region are slowly emerging into the daylight of a new era, and leaving behind them the midnight of the past. This tendency bears on its front the mark of the finger of God, and among the signs of the times it is one that speaks the most impressively of a secret power to unite, that no combination of jealousy, interest, and pride, can overcome or counteract.

2. *These signs betoken a spreading conviction among the nations of their need of mutual intercourse and support.* A proud isolation, or a selfish independence, can no longer exist, and is no longer indulged or desired. The various gifts of God are quickly becoming, as they ever

should be, the common property of his creatures, and the luxuriance of one part of his earth, is finding for itself channels of supply to more sterile regions. Thus the superabundance of one product is seeking for exchange in the counterpart abundance of some other part of the globe. The plenty and the want are thus intermingled for the accomplishment of a mutual good, and mankind are learning with an unparalleled velocity, that none can live alone. Underlying this conviction there is the plain and merciful purpose of God in the final union of His creatures, and by this glowing sign of the times He is teaching them the knowledge, as preparatory to the full exercise, of "brotherly kindness, which is charity."\*

3. *The signs, in all probability, indicate the preliminary exposure of the enormity, in order to the final abolition, of all warlike instrumentalities from among the nations.* That these are doomed to be destroyed,—in other words, that war is to be abolished from among men, is a distinct prophecy of Scripture. "They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more," (Isaiah ii. 4) are the words of Him who ruleth in heaven and upon the earth. And having spoken shall He fail to accomplish his own purpose or be thought unable to fulfil his own word? That He will effect his own design in the utter abolition of war is thus placed beyond all doubt; but how will He work this end? And with what agency will He remove this curse from among men? That it will be by some humiliating process that shall prostrate the pride and lay low the power, of the warlike nations, is exceedingly probable, for it is distinctly stated that "He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people," and then they shall abandon this terrible evil. But what shall be the character of that "rebuke?" Will it be by permitting a carnage that shall terrify the nations by its very enormity? Or, leaving them to the havoc of their own inventions,—giving them up for a time to the full sweep of their own deadly experiments—will He suffer them to be filled with horror at the fruits of the mischievous ingenuity in which they have so long indulged? Or, to scatter their pride, and bend their power to the dust, will He permit some marked and humiliating discomfiture,—some signal overthrow of the greatest warlike powers upon earth, that shall operate as an effectual "rebuke" to the whole world, and compel an immediate abandonment of destructive weapons by an aroused and alarmed universe? Without insisting on any one of these probabilities as the mode by which the great Supreme will "rebuke" these warlike nations, it may be remarked that farther on in the same prophecy it is declared that the humiliation will be complete—that the lofty looks of man, his haughtiness, every one that is proud and lofty and lifted up—shall be bowed down and laid low, when God "ariseth to shake terribly the earth." The more feasible construction to be put upon the whole, is, that He will humble them by their own supposed

\* The recent Congress in Paris of the chief practical men connected with the postal service of the great Powers, including America, is another most encouraging fact. Great results will yet flow from that quiet but important gathering. Verily, the stone cut from the mountain without hands is silently doing its work. (Daniel ii. 45)—*W. S.*

might, and "rebuken" them into a pacific course by permitting them to be punished by the instruments of death which their inconsiderate ingenuity has devised. He will thus make them utterly ashamed of their boasted glory, and fill them with dismay by the terror of their own inventions. Thus, in all probability, the men who by their invention of deadly instruments of unparalleled destructiveness for the supposed defence of their country, are unconsciously preparing the instruments that an insulted Providence will employ, to administer to a carnal-trusting nation a final, if not a fatal "rebuken"\*

4. *These signs forebode the approach of a great opposition and probable persecution by the Devil, prior to his being seized and bound for the prophetic period of "a thousand years."* The last struggle of expiring animals is reported to be the most severe; so, possibly, will be the last great effort of the prince of darkness. This is rendered not merely probable, but certain, by the representations of God's holy word. "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea!" says the book of Revelations; "for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time." (Revelations xii. 12) Of the fact itself there should be no manner of doubt, but of the character of the trial there is great uncertainty. It may be by Popery,—by Puseyism,—or by Infidelity. The agency may be rough, hostile, and persecuting; or it may be smooth as oil and calm as the breath of a Summer's evening. The enemy may be like a fiery dragon, or far more probable, an "angel of light" who "shall deceive if possible, the very elect." The sign forebodes his early coming—but whether as an enemy fierce to devour, or as a false friend skilful to deceive, the future alone can determine.

5. *But with all that is foreboding, the signs of the times very clearly indicate a wide-spread preparation for the universal extension of the Gospel among mankind.* We must be blind indeed to all existing facts if we fail to see this great purpose of God at work in the world. In this work the Baptist, the Independent, the Wesleyan, the Episcopalian, the Presbyterian, and other parties, are earnestly, actively, and constantly engaged in spreading the Gospel among mankind in every region upon earth. Underlying all sectarian projects, and despite all the bitterness of party feeling and angry controversy, this mighty enterprise is advancing with a rapidity that indicates the near approach of some better period than the world has hitherto seen. While the Infidels sneers, the Rationalist opposes, the Papist raves, and too frequently some Christians sleep, yet the Gospel spreads, and the sower is sowing the seed. To arrest the progress of this mighty operation, even were there found any persons so insane as to make the trial, would prove an utter impossibility. From 1559, when the Swedes first attempted the work of Missions in Lapland, to the present period, the work has been slowly, silently, but irresistibly spreading; and since 1793, when Carey was raised up to give it a fresh impetus, it has progressed with an amazing energy, and extended to nearly the farthest ends of the earth. That it is the work of God, no right-minded man will deny;

\* Is not the present disastrous American war, with its consequences in the pauperism of tens of thousands of British operatives, a "rebuken?" And must it be repeated? If so, the next will be far more severe and alarming.—W. S.

and that the great Supreme intends by it the introduction of a new era, in which light, and truth, and love, shall finally predominate over darkness, error, and animosity, is among the plainest teachings of "the signs of the times."

The practical improvement of this survey of the signs of the times will be—*First. That we exercise strong faith in God, for the fulfilment of every Divine purpose, and the perfect completion of every gracious design.* Whatever may be the dark language of these signs, He will not fail to accomplish all his pleasure until a conquered world shall lay submissive at his feet. *Second. That we give ourselves to mighty prayer for a large outpouring of the Holy Spirit.* Gathering wise experience from every past failure, and receiving encouragement from the gracious promise of the Father, let us give him no rest until the scenes of the first Pentecost are repeated throughout the modern church. *Third. We should learn from these signs to be prepared to suffer.* Should it prove true that a period of trial is at hand,—if, for the sake of truth and holiness, God should permit persecution to arise,—surely it becomes us to be ready for all his will. Our forefathers suffered the loss of all things. Regarding the truth of heaven as more valuable than life, they entered the dungeon with joy, and embraced the stake with gladness, to preserve that truth to their children. Let us study to prove ourselves worthy of such an ancestry; and whether the trial be one of fiery pain or more treacherous guile, be it our aim to be found faithful unto death. *Fourth. That we take firm hold of the great principles of Divine Truth.* Let us ever beware of courting the world's favour at the expense of that truth. Give popularity to the wind, and the smile of false friends to the whirlwind, rather than part with a fraction of the truth of God. Above all, beware of the approbation of the half-hearted in the cause of that truth. Turn from them and resolve to travel alone sooner than barter your fidelity for the sake of their patronage. Standing thus firm in the truth, and being "no more children tossed to and fro," we shall prove by a stern and manly faithfulness that we have not studied in vain, "THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES."

### THE GOSPEL AND ITS EFFECTS.

BY A. SPENCER, LONG PRESTON.

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." (ROMANS I. 16)

THE words above were spoken by Paul. To comprehend them, we must view the church, as constituted by Christ and his apostles, in her infantile state. Disciples were but few, principally poor, and widely scattered. Judaism could boast of its numbers and antiquity. It could count among its votaries prophets and kings. It could rejoice on account of what God had done for Jews in the past; and exultingly point to promises which indicated what he would do for them in days to come. The Greeks also could boast of their wisdom, and exult

in the magnitude of their achievements. But what was there in Christianity of a worldly nature, that was calculated to call forth the approbation of wicked and ungodly men? There was nothing. Its founder was the despised Nazarene. Disciples were not only few and poor, but they were exposed to suffering and death. Some of them rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his (Christ's) name. (Acts v. 41) "And took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." (Heb. x. 34) Viewed, therefore, by a proud Greek, or a superstitious Jew, Christianity possessed nothing but what was contemptible, and of which a man ought to be ashamed. Viewed, however, by individuals who were divinely taught, Christianity was the all-important matter, the "one thing needful," that deserved universal approbation. It was in reality the true development of the Jewish economy. Its constituents were the true spiritual seed of Abraham, and "heirs according to the promise." It makes known the highest wisdom, and exalts the soul of man to heaven. Since Paul understood it, we wonder not that he should declare,—cast out as he was by the Jews, and derided by the Greeks,—"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." What was it on account of which Paul was not ashamed? "The gospel of Christ." By this word "gospel" we are to understand good news, or glad tidings. It is the annunciation of a free and honourable forgiveness to condemned and hell-deserving sinners. It is the proclamation of eternal life, to men who were doomed to everlasting misery. It embodies all that is made known to us in the New Testament. The gospel of Christ supposes and announces that man is fallen and condemned. If he be not so, he neither needs forgiveness nor exaltation. To proclaim either would be offering an insult, and it would follow that the all-wise Creator has made known a more than useless proclamation. Is it not a disparagement of the infinite wisdom of God to ask, is it possible for him to have made such a mistake? To state it would display the greatest irreverence; it would be totally erroneous, and an impeachment of God's glorious character. Is not God the King of all the earth? Has He not given laws—holy, just, and good—for the government of his subjects? Do not his laws require a perfect heart, and a perfect life? If man be unable in his present state to answer these requirements, the blame belongs to himself. He has ruined himself. When God made him, he made him able to perform all his will; or, as Milton expresses it, "able to stand, but free to fall." If man has fallen, and if he be now unable to perform the will of God, God is clear. What is the fact? Alas! alas! man has fallen. The fine gold has become dim. The divine image has departed. God has been driven from the throne of the heart, and an enemy has been permitted to reign. The world has gone astray from God like a lost sheep from the fold, or like the Prodigal Son from his father's house, in thought, word, and deed. The holy laws of heaven have been trampled under foot; the desires of the carnal mind have been followed, and the heart has become a cage of unclean birds. Clouds of profanations and insults have ascended to the skies. As God is just, since man has voluntarily broken his laws, how can he be otherwise than in a state of condemnation? Can men rebel against lawful authority and be innocent? Decidedly not. "Cursed is every one that continueth

not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." (Gal. iii. 10) The gospel of Christ is a revelation of the love of God. That there are events which transpire that apparently militate against the goodness of God, we are prepared to admit. A widowed mother loses by death an only child upon whom she was dependant, and she is left to subsist upon the cold hand of charity. A Christian lingers month after month in excessive pain. Scores of men are buried alive in the coal pit, and multitudes are lost at sea; and, in consequence, numbers of widows and orphans are created. These are mysteries. We cannot understand why the Almighty should cause and permit such events to transpire. It is not necessary that we should. Can it be expected that the ways of the Creator can be fully understood by his creatures? Does the child always understand the ways of its parent? Does it always know the reason why it has sometimes to endure pain? How then can it be expected that we can "find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Ought we not rather to be surprised that the Almighty has enabled us to understand so much? And, considering the amount of sin which prevails in the world; considering the vast amount of provocation which is sent to the skies, we ought to be surprised that the amount of suffering is so small. If God should deal with us only as we deserve, we should obtain no blessing at all. We should have nothing but suffering. The smallness of our suffering shows that God is love. Also, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." (Matt. v. 45) He exercises long forbearance towards those who live in rebellion against him. He favours them with his inestimable word. He sends his servants to teach them and to warn them of their danger. He permits some to be surrounded with gospel light, Christian churches, and pious relatives. Above all, He has delivered up his own Son to live and to die the death of the cross for sinners. "God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16)

The gospel of Christ reveals a righteousness in which guilty sinners are justified. By righteousness we are to understand that which enables a guilty, condemned sinner to stand with acceptance in the presence of God, who is just. From what has been already stated, it will appear that as men have broken or transgressed the holy laws of God, and sent to the skies a cloud of insults, they are unrighteous, condemned, and exposed to eternal death. Having once broken the holy law; having once fallen beneath its curse, however much they may strive to obey it in the future, even if they could obey it perfectly, their past sins render them unrighteous. Still, if they are to enjoy God's favour on earth, or eternal life in the future, they must be righteous. God will not admit to the enjoyment of his favour, or to the glory of heaven, unrighteous, unsanctified men. The gospel of Christ makes known the way in which sinners can be made righteous and raised to heaven. "God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." (Gal. iv. 4-5) As man had sinned in the body, and deserved to suffer in the body, Christ humbled himself and took a body; and in that body obeyed and suffered for man. His nature and

his obedience were perfect. Justice called for the sinner's blood; it doomed him to eternal death. Jesus paid his own blood. He died that sinners might live. His death was substitutionary. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." (1 Peter iii. 18) All his obedience to the law, and all he endured on the cross when he died, is called righteousness. God accepts every believer in it. As our sins were laid on Christ, his righteousness is put upon us. It is "unto all and upon all them that believe." (Rom. iii. 22) As the righteousness of Christ is perfect, every believer is justified in it. Christ is "made unto us wisdom and righteousness." (1 Cor. i. 30) The very moment a sinner rests his soul upon the finished work of Christ, he passes from a state of condemnation "into the glorious liberty of the children of God."

In the gospel of Christ we have a revelation of all that a sinner requires. The wisdom of God shines illustriously in the gospel system. A foolish builder begins to erect a noble mansion before he has counted the cost, consequently, he is unable to finish it. Not so the Almighty. The Saviour, whom he has provided, is just the one whom the sons and daughters of Adam required. Do men need a foundation upon which to build their hopes of heaven? "Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; and he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isa. xxviii. 16) There can be no doubt as to whom this stone refers, after what the apostle says is understood. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11) Is man hungry and thirsty? Christ declares, "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." (John vi. 55) Is man polluted with sin? "The blood of Jesus Christ his (God's) son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1-7) Are we sick and wounded? Christ is the Physician for the soul, and the balm of Gilead. If we be weak, he is "the Lion of the tribe of Juda." If we be liable to err, he "is made unto us wisdom." If we be helpless and friendless, he is "a present help in times of trouble," and the "friend that sticketh closer than a brother." If there be any other mercy that a sinner needs, it is found in him. "Christ is all, and in all." "It hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." (Col. i. 19)

The gospel of Christ is the full development of what God made known to the Patriarchs and Prophets. Only one way to heaven has been made known. The chief facts of the gospel, the essentials to salvation, were published in prophetic times. Certainly, the gospel is a clearer annunciation; but the doctrines are in the main the same. Did God teach the Jews that he was holy, and just, that they were sinners, and that he required purity, by the sacrifices, and by the whole of the sacred ritual which he enjoined upon them? Does not the cross of Christ proclaim more loudly the same things? Did God instruct the Jews by their sacrifices, that, without shedding of blood, there was no remission of sin? The same solemn truth is taught us by the cross. Would the allwise Creator have permitted his only begotten son to suffer, and bleed, and die for sinners on the cross, if remission of sin had been possible in some other way? "If it be possible," the Redeemer prayed, "let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not my

will, but thine be done." The issue shows that the cup did not pass from him. Justice called for the blood of the sinner, the Saviour paid his own. Did the saints in olden time look by faith through their offerings to the sacrifice on the cross? Saints look by faith to the cross now. We look to the Saviour who has been. The Jews looked to the Saviour who was to come. As the planets revolve around the sun, all the saints cluster around the cross of Christ. Had the Jews their kings, prophets, and priests? Christ is our King, our Prophet, and our "great high priest that is passed into the heavens." Did the saints of old rejoice in the resurrection of the dead? So do saints now. Being Christ's we are "Abraham's seed," circumcised in heart, "and heirs according to the promise." If the Jews had understood these matters, they would not have cast Paul off. They would have followed him.

The gospel of Christ is a manifestation of the wisdom of God. Ignorance is the mother of many vices and much misery. It was ignorance, as well as sin, that crucified the son of God. It is ignorance that originates and promotes erroneous systems of religion; and it is the very thing that endangers men's spiritual interests. The Greeks were specially concerned for wisdom. As the gospel was supposed by them to possess none—to be a system of foolishness—we are not surprised that they turned away from it with aversion. Professing to be wise, they showed great ignorance. Had they understood what the gospel was, they would have seen that it possessed the highest wisdom. Nowhere but in the gospel is the question answered; how can God be just and the justifier of the guilty? The wisest Greek, apart from the gospel, could never answer such a question satisfactorily. Nowhere is there so perfect a system of morality found, as is propounded in the gospel. It is the only system which makes man truly wise.

It is designated the *gospel of Christ*. It is doubtless so called, because it contains and abounds with Christ. It contains his pre-existence, his birth, his person—the God man. It contains his life, a life of holiness, activity, sympathy, and suffering. It contains his death, his resurrection, victory, and intercession. It contains his glorious titles—Priest, King, Saviour, &c. The objects of the whole of his mediatorial work are clearly stated and illustrated. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the gospel,—

"Should all the forms that men devise,  
Assault my faith with treach'rous art;  
I'd call them vanity and lies,  
And bind the gospel to my heart."  
(To be concluded in the next.)

**RELIGION.**—Religion is the fear of God, and its demonstration good works; and faith is the root of both: "for without faith we cannot please God;" nor can we fear what we do not believe. The devils also believe, and know abundance; but in this is the difference, their faith works not by love, nor their knowledge by obedience; and therefore they are never the better for them. And if ours be such, we shall be of their church, not of Christ's; for as the head is, so must the body be.—*William Penn.*

## GOSPEL OBEDIENCE ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

By JOHN BROWN, A.M., CONLIG, IRELAND.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (ROMANS x. 9, 10)

Two things are here pointed out by the apostle as being essential to salvation, namely, the belief of the heart, and the confession of the mouth. Both these things are equally *necessary*, but in different respects. The belief of the heart is necessary to the receiving of the righteousness of Christ, and the confession of the mouth is necessary as an evidence that that righteousness has been received. The confession of the mouth is not necessary to justification; for it is the belief of the heart, and not the confession of the mouth, that receives the righteousness of Christ; but the confession of the mouth is as *necessary* to our final salvation as the belief of the heart.\* For the promise of salvation is as much connected with the one as with the other, and it is as expressly asserted that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, as that with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

But the confession of the mouth includes much more than the bare acknowledgement that there was such a person as Jesus Christ, who suffered, died, and rose again. It includes the whole body of doctrinal and practical religion, both as it regards positive institutions and moral precepts. For Jesus "became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey* Him," and unto them *only*. Such only shall be acknowledged as His disciples in the great day. "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess Me before men," says the Redeemer, "him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. x. 32, 33)

A very unscriptural distinction is sometimes made between the essentials and non essentials of religion, as if some of the things which God has enjoined in His word might be safely dispensed with. Those who yield a strict and circumstantial obedience to the whole will of Christ are accordingly charged with bigotry and punctiliousness. The rebuke which Jesus administered to the self-righteous Pharisees is pressed into this service. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites? for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith." (Matt. xxiii. 23) By a misapplication of these words, those who strictly adhere to the will of Christ in what are called *minor matters* are compared to the Pharisees who paid tithe of "mint, anise, and cummin." It ought to be borne in mind, however, that Jesus does not condemn the pharisees for their close attention to the smaller matters, but for

\* The thought here is too strongly expressed.—Ed.

their inconsistency and hypocrisy in attending so exactly to these, and overlooking things of greater importance—"judgment, mercy, and faith." So far is He from condemning them for their close attention to the *minutiae* of religion, that He makes *that* the subject of commendation in the subsequent clause of the verse,—"*These things ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*"

The distinction between the essentials and non-essentials of religion is utterly UNKNOWN in the Holy Scriptures. Universal obedience to all the revealed will of Christ, in so far as it is understood, is the only term of Christian discipleship recognised by the Saviour. "Ye are My friends," says Jesus, "if ye do *WHATSOEVER* I command you." (John xv. 14) We are not at liberty to pick and choose among the commandments of Christ. The phrase "*whatsoever* I command" certainly includes *all* His commandments, and those only who do "*whatsoever*" He commands are acknowledged to be His disciples. The true Christian esteems "*all* His precepts concerning *all* things to be right," and hates "*every* false way." (Psa. cxix. 128) The man, therefore, who can voluntarily and deliberately neglect or transgress any known commandment of Christ, "*whatsoever*" that commandment may be, does not give evidence at the time that he is a Christian.

Baptism is considered by many as belonging to the class of non-essentials. And we readily admit that it is not essential to *justification*, nor does it form any part of it. It is not the personal obedience of the believer, but the imputed righteousness of Christ that forms the ground of his justification before God. Neither is it essential to *regeneration*. Regeneration consists in a change of heart, and not in a mere external rite. Baptism is only the *symbol* of regeneration, and consequently is as distinct from it as "an outward and visible sign" is distinct from "an inward and spiritual grace."

But though baptism be neither essential to justification nor regeneration, it is essential to personal obedience, and personal obedience is essential to holiness, and holiness is essential to our getting to heaven; "holiness without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14) It does not follow, therefore, that because baptism is distinct from justification and regeneration it is in no sense essential. Christ's commission to the apostles will not warrant such a conclusion. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark xvi. 15, 16) These words ought not to be explained so as to imply that no one under any circumstances can be saved without baptism, because we learn from other parts of Scripture that salvation has been obtained without it. But neither ought they to be explained so as to imply that salvation can be obtained without it, *unless under special circumstances*, such as:—

1. *Physical inability*, of which we have an example in the case of the thief on the cross. It was naturally impossible for him to be baptized, and, therefore, it was not required. He was accordingly admitted to heaven without baptism.

2. *Want of light on the subject*, as in the case of those who, though they earnestly wish to know, and do Christ's will, are convinced that He requires infants to be baptized, and that they themselves were

baptized in infancy; consequently that it would be wrong to be baptized on a profession of faith, because they would esteem this a second baptism. I do not plead for the innocence of involuntary error, for I believe *all* error to be sin, however conscientiously it may be held; but he who, though in error, is unconscious of being so, and would abandon it if he knew it to be error, is not chargeable with wilful rebellion, as the man is who knows his Master's will and does it not. But the man who does not care to know what is the will of Christ, or who, though he perceives what His will is, declines to submit to His authority, ought not to be recognized as a Christian.

This may seem a harsh saying to some; but notwithstanding the latitudinarian spirit of the age,—notwithstanding the diversity of sentiment which prevails among the people of God in the present divided state of the church,—it is a sentiment which will be subscribed by the best men of all denominations.

The judicious Archibald M'Lean says, in reference to John iii. 5, and Titus. iii. 5, "As to the *necessity of baptism to salvation*, it is not more strongly expressed in these passages, than in some others, concerning which there is no dispute; such as, 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' (Mark xvi. 16) 'The like figure whereunto baptism doth also now *save us*.' (1 Pet. iii. 21) 'Be baptized and wash away thy sins.' (Acts xxii. 16) Baptism cannot be necessary to infants for whom it was never intended; who can neither observe nor reject it any more than they can believe or disbelieve the gospel, and so are entirely out of the question. Nor is it absolutely necessary to those who never heard of it, or who cannot possibly obtain it. Christ requires no impossibilities. It is not the mere want, but wilful contempt or neglect of it which condemns men; for it is the *thing signified* which saves. But should they make light of baptism, knowing it to be a standing institution of Christ, and neglect it when it is in their power, however high their pretensions may be in other respects, we are warranted from our Lord's words to tell them they cannot enter His Kingdom without repentance; and this is no more than may be said of the like treatment of His other commandments."—*M'Lean's Works*, Vol. 1. page 130.

But it may be said M'Lean was a strict communionist. Well, so he was. But Mr. Robert Hall was an open communionist. Let us hear him. "I assert," says he, "that in the apostolic age, baptism was necessary to salvation," and that at present "the *WILFUL* perversion of the least of Christ's precepts, or the *DELIBERATE* and *VOLUNTARY* rejection of His instructions in the smallest instance, would betray an insincerity utterly inconsistent with the Christian character. 'He who shall break the least of these commandments, and teach men so, he shall be of no account in the kingdom of heaven.'" "Let it be remembered that we are far from intending to insinuate that baptism is of little moment; or that a wanton inattention to this part of the will of Christ is consistent with a well-founded assurance of salvation."—*Reply to Mr. Kinghorn*, pages 43, 45, 267.

Even Dr. DWIGHT, who was a *Padobaptist*, fully concurs in this view. He differs from the above writers as to what baptism is, but he perfectly agrees with them as to the necessity of yielding obedience to

what is believed to be Christ's will. "He who understands the nature and authority of this institution," says he, "and refuses to be baptized, will never enter the visible or invisible kingdom of God. As he refuses to become a member of the visible, he will certainly be shut out of the invisible kingdom. Considered with reference to a case of this nature, the passage (John iii. 5) may be justly construed in the literal manner. For he who persisted in this act of rebellion against the authority of Christ will never belong to His Kingdom."—*Dwight's Works*, Vol. vi. page 184.

Thus the Strict Baptist, the Open Baptist, and the Paedobaptist, all agree in this, that the *known* and *wilful* neglect of baptism is proof that a man is not in a state of salvation.

If this be so, it follows that any cause which leads men to think that the observance, or non-observance, of baptism, is of little importance, either in God's sight or to their own salvation, is in itself wrong, and is also ruinous to their best welfare. We have to impress on them the fact that even indifference to it is a symptom of danger, if not of spiritual death.

It follows also that the only ground on which we can with reason believe in the salvation of those who are not willing to be baptized, is that they, in spite of their best endeavours to learn the truth, do not know what it is on this subject.

I believe that immersion and a profession of faith are essential to baptism. Dr. Dwight was only sprinkled in infancy. Consequently, I do not believe that he was ever baptized, and yet I have no doubt that he was saved. But on what ground do I believe it? On the ground that baptism may be dispensed with at pleasure? By no means. Nor would the worthy doctor have desired salvation on these terms. My reason for the belief is his apparent *conscientiousness*, and the evidence he gave of love to Christ; evidence so strong as to justify the impression that he was anxious to *know* the will of Christ; that he availed himself of all the means in his power to find it out; and that, had he known what it was, he would have obeyed it.

But if any of my readers be convicted in their consciences of wilfully overlooking evidence, or shutting their eyes against the light, they are not *conscientious enquirers*; and, consequently, their professed ignorance is not only no excuse, but an aggravation of their sin.

I will here mention a circumstance which has come within the range of my own experience, and which bears directly on the subject in hand. G. M. was an unbaptized member of an Open-communion Baptist Church, and much disposed to argue the cause of the Baptists. One day he attempted to try his powers on an honest covenanter. The covenanter, before consenting to enter on the controversy, asked him, "Are you baptized yourself?" G. M. was of course obliged to answer in the negative. "Well," said the covenanter, "I will discuss the question with any honest Baptist; but I will not argue the matter with you. You say that Christ requires believers to be immersed, and yet you are not immersed yourself. I, therefore, do not regard you as a Christian man at all, for you have no respect for the authority of Him whom you call your Lord." It was a nail fastened in a sure place. *G. M. was baptized without delay.*

This is the right way of treating inconsistent persons, whatever the point may be in which they are inconsistent. Persons whose principles and practice agree, are entitled to respect; but when a man "condemns himself in the thing that he allows," he ought not to be regarded as a pious man, or a man of principle. Speculative Baptists are sometimes called *Baptists in principle*. Baptists *without principle* would be a more appropriate name. How absurd would it be to speak of an *honest man in principle*! An honest man in principle, if not also in practice, is a *knave*; and a Baptist in principle only is a *hypocrite*. That reckless indifference to the will of Christ, which some speak of as proof of a *liberal spirit*, is Antinomianism of the worst description. The true servants of Christ are known by their *scrupulous attention to the will of their Lord*. He Himself has said, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 19, 20) "Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." (Rev. xxii. 14) Their right as to MERIT consists in this, that Christ died for them, and thereby obtained for them eternal redemption; but the doing of His commandments, from love to Him, is that which gives proof that they are the persons for whom He obtained that redemption, and the right to enter the New Jerusalem.

Let us, then, examine the grounds on which we hope. The only foundation on which a sinner can build is the finished work of Christ. Nothing that he himself can do, can merit the favour of God. He can no more depend on his duties, than he can depend on his sins to obtain salvation. That is a free gift; it is "without money and without price." And if we bring a price in our hand when we come to the throne of God's grace, we shall be sadly disappointed. (Rom. ix. 31, 32) We must build our hopes on Christ alone, whose blood "cleanseth us from all sin." But, if we are building them there, His love will constrain us; He will work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure; He will make us obey from the heart the form of teaching delivered to us, and will enable us to live to His praise.

#### BAPTIST EVANGELICAL SOCIETY.

*Outline of Sermon, preached at Soho Chapel, Oxford-street, London, on Wednesday evening, April 22, 1863.*

BY MR. P. DICKERSON.

"How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (ROMANS x. 14, 15)

In the introductory remarks the Preacher referred not only to the

faithfulness of the great Apostle, but also to the affection manifested in the form of his address. "*Brethren*, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." The Apostle spoke of two distinct righteousnesses,—that of the law, and that of faith; and the distinction between them was clearly pointed out.

I. The great theme of the glorious gospel ministry—Christ and him crucified. The person of Christ in his complexity of character, comprehending his Divinity and humanity; his perfect righteousness; his full atonement and sacrificial death; his triumphant resurrection; his ever-prevalent intercession, and inexhaustible fulness of grace and mercy. This grand theme was contrasted with the subjects of addresses by many Christian ministers, which seem chiefly calculated to amuse the hearers; and the question was suggested, as to whether such a novel, but somewhat extensive practice, was to be commended or condemned, especially considering the language of the Apostle: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The speaker enlarged upon the subject of the atonement, maintaining that it is perfect, special and effectual, as applied to the conscience by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. This gospel is to be preached faithfully, affectionately, constantly, with great earnestness, simplicity, and plainness of speech.

II. The great end and object to be kept in view. The great object of preaching is, that men may be induced to repent, believe, call upon the Lord, and be saved. We are responsible for the sentiments we advance and maintain, and the *spirit* in which we fulfil our ministry; but we are not responsible for success. Nevertheless, if we sow the good seed, and water it with prayer, labouring in entire dependence upon the Spirit, we are assured that we shall not labour in vain, nor spend our strength for nought.

III. The peculiar obligation of the church. It is quite true that God always makes and sends forth his own ministers; but it is the constant duty of the church, to pray unto the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth more labourers into his harvest, as well as more abundantly bless those who are already in the field. Ministers and churches should give a greater prominence to this subject in their prayers. It is also the duty of every church to watch for the first manifestation of ministerial ability, and encourage it.

The preacher then referred in an interesting manner to the constitution and operations of the Society, instancing the case of Apollos, who was taken in hand by Aquila and Priscilla: who having heard him preach, and admiring his zeal, took him and "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." (Acts xviii. 24—28) Let the ministers and churches speak kindly to the young man who has received a ministerial gift,—let them pray for him, lend him books, encourage him in his early attempts to preach the gospel, and, joining with others in the support of this Society, let those who have the opportunity avail themselves of the advantages it offers.

## Correspondence.

### THE RAMSGATE CHAPEL CASE, &c.

*To the Editor of the Primitive Church Magazine.*

MY DEAR SIR, AND FAITHFUL BROTHER IN CHRIST,—I have received various little kind notices from you since I last wrote to you, and have often thought of writing to you long ere now. Among the many topics which have engaged my attention of late with more than ordinary interest, I must place at the top of the list, the—to me—astonishing “Ramsgate Chapel Case!” I read the progress of the case in open court, as given in the *Freeman* from time to time, and not knowing the spirit which actuated the “Vice-chancellor” in so far as Christian “pureness” is concerned, I expected the case to terminate as it did. Yet the most astounding part of the whole business—to me at least—was a speech I saw lately, said to be made at a social gathering of the church now occupying “Cavendish Chapel,” met for the purpose of presenting their present pastor, Mr. Etheridge, with a certain sum of money; but evidently as much under the impulse of giving a public demonstration of their joy, in consequence of having obtained possession of “Cavendish Chapel” from the Strict Baptists, and devoting it in future to the use of those only who will agree to violate the Heaven-Established Order of Messiah’s Kingdom upon Earth. I am much in the habit of lending my periodical, and having had only one reading of it, I cannot attempt any quotations from the speech. But the impression which that address left upon my mind, I shall

never forget while I remember any thing; namely, that there are *three* things connected with “The Cavendish Chapel Case” which ought to make the *successful* party at law *blush*, not only before “The High and Holy One,” but also before their fellow-men. First, they have obtained the place at the expence of others, as a religious home for the neglectors of the authority of Jesus in reference to Christian Baptism! Second, by their *struggle* in that “Chapel Case,” they have proclaimed, not only to the present, but to future generations, that they consider Christian Baptism, a “Nonentity.” People may respect it or they may not, they will prove nothing the worse which ever way they may treat it! I know of no party under the Christian name who so lightly esteem Christian Baptism as the “Open-communion Baptists;” and so far as my information guides me, the “Friends” or Quakers are no exception. The only difference between their views of that ordinance and our own is, they do not consider it to be of perpetual obligation. Is there another denomination under the Christian name who would admit to the “Table of the Lord” an unbaptized person, far less persons at random, besides the Open-communion Baptists? No, NONE, so far as I am aware; and, should it be done hereafter, it would only be from the example set them by our Open-communion brethren. Alas, that it should ever happen that *Baptists* should set the example of *detracting from the authority of Zion’s King!* In the third place, it was acknowledged in open court that a lady in Ramsgate, a conscientious Strict

Communionist, understanding that the church in Cavendish Chapel was to continue Strict Communion, most generously gave £3,000 towards the erection of the chapel. Now, however, by the innovation introduced in the order of the church, not only without authority from the "Head over all things to the church," but, as I think, in *opposition* to HIS authority, she is, for conscience sake, obliged to withdraw from the place, and shift for herself as best she may without any proposition, that I am aware of, by any of the occupiers of the place, to return to that lady the £3,000 she sunk in the erection of this chapel. Will any human law exonerate conscience from the plain duty of paying back that lady's money? Possibly the lady referred to may not be the only sufferer *living*. Be that as it may, if single-hearted Christianity be called to the bench, and when seated be requested to decide how this sum should be disposed of, would not the verdict be,—“Why, you who now occupy the place—Cavendish Chapel—either return to Strict Communion in practice, or pay back the money at once to its rightful owner.” You have doubtless seen the speech I refer to, and if so, may have reviewed it in some number of our *Magazine* I have not seen. If not, I hope and beg we may be favoured with *your* review of it as soon as you can possibly find *time* and *room* for it.—Dear Sir, affectionately yours, T. S.

*North of the Tweed,  
May 6th, 1863.*

[We were so thoroughly disgusted with the whole proceedings in connection with the above case, that we felt no heart to touch it. But for its denominational associations it would have been below contempt. That men could be found

to rejoice at such a decision, made us blush for the Christian name.—*Ed.*]

#### BAPTISTS IN IRELAND.

*To the Editor of the Primitive Church Magazine.*

DEAR SIR,—I must again trespass on your space. Mr. Medhurst has brought forward a quotation from “*The Irish Chronicle* of February, 1862,” to “show the value of my statement,” with reference to the Abbey-street Baptist Church receiving support from the Baptist Irish Society; which quotation is only an extract from the letter of a correspondent, and is incorrect; being without any foundation whatever. Mr. Milligan, the late pastor, at one time received a salary from the Baptist Irish Society as their collector; which salary could in no wise be looked on as a grant from the Society; being wages for work done, received by him without the consent, or knowledge, and contrary to the interest of the church.

My object, however, in replying to Mr. Medhurst, was not so much to show that the Abbey-street Church has always been self-supporting until the present year, (which is an undeniable fact), as to remove the idea conveyed by Mr. Medhurst, that Baptist principles in Dublin, are owing to the efforts of the Baptist Irish Society. Mr. Medhurst quotes a number of churches as “gathered” and supported by the Society,—and making special reference to Abbey-street, he says, “This church is now self-supporting,”—while the contrary is the fact. Abbey-street Church has existed for 200 years, and it is only during the past six months that it has ceased to be self-supporting. I would make the following remarks of it and others which Mr. Medhurst has named:—

Abbey-street Church could not have been "gathered" by the Baptist Irish Society, being more than 100 years senior to that Society. Waterford, too, is its senior. Tobermore was "gathered," not by the agents of the Baptist Irish Society, but by the self-denying labours of the late Dr. Carson, who purchased truth at the expence of every prospect of worldly gain, and whose memory and writings will endure for ages. Ballymena was "gathered" by Mr. Mc. Vicars, who gave up all he had for truth. Portadown by Mr. Charles Morgan, who gratuitously laboured in that place for some time with great success. Dunfonghy by Mr. Livingstone where, for many years, while labouring in his master's work, his own hands ministered to his wants. I could say more about these and other churches if your space would permit. I have before me at present a list of thirty-one Baptist churches in Ireland, nineteen of which I have been privileged to visit, and know something of the history and principles of most of them. There are only eight out of the thirty-one strict in communion, all the rest are open; and I do not know of one that could be said to have been "gathered" by the Baptist Irish Society. We had Baptists and Baptist churches in Ireland before the Baptist Irish Society was in existence, whoever writes otherwise knows very little of the history of the Irish Baptists. To your correspondent, "a Baptist," I would say that, although I believe Open-communion to be contrary to the Word of God, I do not think it bears any relationship to Socinianism, and at the time of which Mr. Fuller wrote, although some had fallen into grievous error, and some fell far short of their profession, yet the Lord—who of old had preserved to himself seven thousand men in

Israel—who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal—preserved in this church a few who were faithful; they withdrew till the accursed thing was put away.

Yours truly,

HENRY ALRIDGE.

88, Talbot-street, Dublin,  
May, 1863.

#### BAPTIST TRACT SOCIETY.

*To the Editor of the Primitive Church Magazine.*

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—Will you admit an appeal to the churches and Christian friends on behalf of the Baptist Tract Society?

The Society has been working now twenty-two years; it has published 236 tracts, 75 handbills, and 31 children's books. It will be seen by the report just issued, and which may be had either of Mr. Stock, the publisher, or myself, that since the commencement, above three millions of tracts, &c., consisting of above seventeen million of pages, have been printed; some of which have been circulated in all parts of the world, and many translated into different languages. All this has been done with a very small income; the labour is performed by all the officers gratuitously; applications are constantly made from needy churches and districts, and missionaries abroad for grants. Some hundreds of thousands have been sent free—the cost of which has been about £450, and about £80 has been given in money to translations and printing in foreign languages. Old friends have entered their rest; churches have not given collections as formerly; the general distress of the last two years has diminished our resources; and we have no agent to travel and collect for us. Would some of our ministerial brethren give, or get us,

collections? Several used to do so. If I were younger I would do this myself, but I hope this will not be needed; perhaps a kind word from you, Mr. Editor, would do more than I can. I have just received the following letter, which will, I am sure, be read with interest; and, I hope, produce some good result to the funds of the Society.—By inserting it you will oblige, yours sincerely, E. J. OLIVER.

2, Chatham Place, Walworth,  
June 13th, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR,—I have received the parcel containing tracts, books, and pamphlets which you so kindly sent me, and I beg you to present my best thanks to the committee of the Baptist Tract Society for their valuable gift of tracts (nearly 2,000), and accept the same for yourself for the other tracts and books which you have kindly sent me. I have read many of the tracts with much pleasure; and, I believe, with much profit to myself. The members of our church and the congregation (I mean those who can read and understand English) have thankfully accepted suitable tracts, and when we have occasion to write to our brethren or friends who reside in other parts of the island, we usually enclose a suitable tract in the letter sent by post, and have heard from them expressing thanks for the good they derive by reading those invaluable tracts; I also distributed a good many of them on my journeys.

*This is also in contemplation if we can obtain sufficient funds to meet the expenses of paper and printing, to translate into Singhaless and print a selection of these tracts for distribution amongst our countrymen who need very much to be enlightened on many subjects that are taught in these tracts. May I beg of you to send me a copy of your*

Annual Report with a list of publications through Messrs. Whittard and Baxter.

The Heathens are now very active in disseminating their poisonous doctrines, both by the press and by lectures. So are the Roman Catholics multiplying their pernicious tracts throughout the length and breadth of the land; and shall we, who have the pure, unadulterated gospel, sit inactive? No, it is time that the friends of the Redeemer's cause preach the gospel and teach the true doctrines of the Cross, which only can counteract the poison of Heathenism or Popery. Blessed be God the gospel is preached, and may God send more labourers and give success to his word. Praying that the blessing of our Saviour Jesus Christ may rest on you and on your efforts for His glory.—I remain, yours in the best of bonds, JAMES SILVA.

P.S.—Since writing the above we have had the Jubilee of the Ceylon Baptist Mission held on the 14th instant, on which occasion about 1,000 native Christians and friends assembled and had a Jubilee service, which was a day of delight to all, but especially to those who *know* the joyful sound.

The Buddhists here are eagerly perusing Bishop Colenso's book and making use of its contents in their tracts against Christianity. If there are any tracts published against him, may I beg you will kindly forward some to me. I shall be obliged also for a copy of Baxter's Catalogue.—Yours truly in Christ Jesus, JAMES SILVA.

Colombo, Ceylon Baptist  
Mission House, Grandpass,  
April 11th, 1863.

E. J. Oliver, Esq., 2, Chatham  
Place, Walworth.

[Surely this appeal to the

churches will not be made in vain. A more thoroughly useful Society of its class than the Baptist Tract Society is not to be found in the land. Were not our own hands so full already, we should *at once* go forth among the churches on its behalf.—Ed.]

PROPOSED CONFERENCE  
BETWEEN THE STRICT  
BAPTISTS OF ENGLAND  
AND AMERICA.

*To the Editor of the Primitive  
Church Magazine.*

DEAR BROTHER,—Please insert in the *Primitive* the following extract of a letter received from my friend, Dr. Daniel C. Eddy, of Philadelphia, United States. At present, of course, the suggestion could not be acted upon, but it may be well to have the subject meanwhile well ventilated:—

DEAR BROTHER,—A single word on another subject, Communion. You refer to it in your letter. We stand on the Strict Communion platform, because we could not stand on any other and be consistent. It is a matter of sacred principle with us. Our churches are all Independent, Strict Communion, and Calvinistic. Would it not be a good plan for the Strict Baptists of England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and America to hold a Conference in London or elsewhere when the war is over? Might not an interchange of views lead to a strengthening of our churches on both sides of the ocean? We have one common cause against the law views which are pressing you on every side, the false liberality which denounces our consistency as bigotry, and our devotion to principle as fanaticism. Such a Conference would give stability to some who are wavering, and bring our sentiments before the people

in a form in which they have never been presented. I doubt not our churches would respond to a movement of this kind on your part, and send delegates to such a meeting. Our great denomination is growing stronger every day under these views of Baptism and Communion, and those who scoff most at restricted Communion sentiments admit our entire consistency.—Yours in Christ,

DANIEL C. EDDY,

Pastor of Tabernacle,  
Baptist Church, Philadelphia,  
United States.

*Philadelphia,*

*May 8th, 1863.*

To Rev. John Stock.

Now, Mr. Editor, of course in calling such a Conference we, on this side of the Atlantic, would refuse to admit any American delegate who was pro-slavery in his views. On this moral and vital question we are assuredly close in our Communion. The announcement of this fact in the present state of parties in America would be of great service to the friends of a wise emancipation policy. Personally I had rather be hung on a gibbet than hold fellowship with the abettors and defenders of that embodiment of lust, and cruelty, and injustice, which has soaked the soil of America with blood. "Consider of it, take advice, and speak your minds."—Yours in our Lord,

JOHN STOCK.

[The above subject, with another having a similar purpose, are already in course of preparation for the due consideration of the Board of Management; and we tender our best thanks to Mr. Stock for the foregoing appropriate extract from Dr. Eddy's letter.—Ed.]

## Reviews.

*Bunyan Library.* Vol. X. *Literary Remains of John Foster.* Being an Essay on the Improvement of Time; Notes on eighteen Sermons; and twenty-one Letters to Friends. With a Preface, by JOHN SHEPPARD. Edited by J. E. RYLAND, M.A. London: J. Heaton and Son. 364 pp.

John Foster was one of the giants of the modern world. As a thinker he had no equal, and as an author no superior. Amidst the lustrous constellation of which he formed a part, his star shone with the most *solid* brilliance; and while others were also radiant with splendour, yet his beamed with a majestic brightness such as none but his own could display.

His valued and eloquent friend, Robert Hall, came the nearest to him in intellectual greatness, but even that distinguished man never possessed, and could never employ, the massive power of Foster. His superior in genius, and in many of the attributes eminent genius usually commands, yet he never equalled his great contemporary in the comprehensive, profound, and original view which that remarkable man took of every subject to which he applied steady thought. Robert Hall was a perfect master of the *beautiful*; but Foster reached a higher eminence in being a more complete master of *mind*.

It is useless to regret, but we may be pardoned for regretting, that a man of such unusual powers—one, the like of whom it may take whole centuries to produce—should have left behind him so little, *comparatively*, for the instruction and im-

provement of mankind. It may be that minds of his order are much slower in their movements, because slower in their conceptions, than those of other men; for these, seldom venturing far, if at all, beneath the surface of things, see almost at a glance all they care to see; and, as a result, report their observations with a prompt and ready ability. But with minds such as Foster's it is very different. Naturally dealing with the profound, and never venturing to touch a question at all until they have inspected its utmost dimensions, and surveyed it in all, even its most remote bearings on every other within the circle of its influence, they are long in *adjusting* themselves to the subject of their speculations; longer in grasping it as presented to their comprehensive gaze; and longer still in transmitting their thoughts upon it to their own satisfaction. Such was a Newton in the physical; a Milton in the poetic; and a Foster in the intellectual world;—and we seriously question whether the "shavings" of men of this stamp would not have proved of more real value than the *volumes* on which smaller men have relied for a much-coveted reputation.

Yet we would not have it thought that there is more than comparative ground for dissatisfaction at the little this eminent man has left behind him as a memento of himself. By no means, and much less

\* Mr. Foster once referred, humorously, to his slow preparations for the *Essay on Doddridge's Rise, &c.*, as his *shavings*.

so when we remember the *character* of his "remains." His celebrated "Essays" are far away ahead of all productions of a similar class; and from its Alpine elevation that masterly work can afford to look down with a benevolent compassion on the whole family of Essayists, like a fabled Jupiter from some golden cloud.

And the present essay is not unworthy of the name or the celebrity of John Foster. All the elements of that powerful mind are here, and could we suppose that the production had been unexpectedly found without a name in some African desert, all who know the author's *stamina* would have hailed it as John Foster's work. We are under deep obligations to the Messrs. Heaton for placing it in the Bunyan Library, and to Mr. Ryland for this most valuable addition to the literary remains of this great man.

The following picture of an "indolent" man who lives but to waste his time, is characteristic of the author. "If he lives in the country, one shall see him on a fine day sitting on a bench near the door, just in order to '*take the fresh air*,' observe what is passing on the road at a little distance, and notice the rural business of the farms that lie in the vale within his view. He will not choose to have much ground himself, there is so much trouble required to manage it, and so much vexation with workmen. But the few fields which he likes to keep in his hands furnish a pleasant little circuit for sauntering round. He will now and then pretend to work a little in his garden, to the diversion of the regular labourers, but will oftener content himself with remarking that it is a pleasant kind of work, and will walk about at his ease, computing the produce of his garden, his fields, and his orchard. I might

have assigned to him a little more of something like mental existence, and still left him profoundly indolent; but this would have brought him into rather a different class of idlers, who may deserve their distinct share of our notice. Now, who is not tempted to reproach the sun for shining on such a piece of moving matter—such a mockery of a rational nature; a thing that can see seasons hastening away, all nature in activity, the moral world in a state of revolution, eminently good and bad men equally prosecuting their designs with an ardour that deplores the necessity of repasts and sleep, the termination of life rapidly approaching, and boundless prospects opening beyond; and preserve, amidst all, as perfect an indifference about time, and improvement, and progressive virtue, and preparation for futurity, as if no such concerns had ever been heard of on the globe? And yet this loathsome and despicable thing has the most entire good opinion of itself, and is not ashamed to show its self-complacent front in any place or company where indolence does not forbid it to go.

\* \* \* When he has consumed his allotted quantity of corn, and spent all the years which have been spent with much more dignity by a toad in the midst of a block of stone, his epitaph might properly be, 'Here lies a person who has lost nothing by being buried, for he is just as good a man under the ground as he was above it.'"  
Pp. 115-116.

In this extract there is all the severity of the stern moralist; but in others the author exhibits himself as the devoted Christian.

To young men especially, we would say emphatically, that, henceforth, no library will be complete without John Foster on THE IMPROVEMENT OF TIME.